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A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

DANIEL WEBSTER.

BY
Henry Augustus
H. A. BOARDMAN, D.D.

©

PHILADELPHIA:

JOSEPH M. WILSON.

228 CHESTNUT STREET.

1852.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA, November 26, 1852.

TO THE REVEREND HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D.D.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR:—

We beg leave most respectfully to ask the favour of you to furnish for publication a copy of your discourse, delivered on Monday evening last, upon the life and character of Daniel Webster. We think it important that this graphic and eloquent tribute to the memory of the departed Statesman should be preserved in an enduring form. It may have a salutary influence upon many aspirants for political distinction, to know that devoted and patriotic services are appreciated, after the actors have passed away; and it may comfort and strengthen the faith of the humble Christian, when he sees the efficacy of his holy religion so triumphantly illustrated in the trying hour of death.

With sentiments of high respect and regard,

We are your friends and fellow-citizens,

R. C. GRIER.	CHARLES GILPIN.
JNO. K. KANE.	JOHN A. BROWN.
GEO. SHARSWOOD.	JAMES DUNDAS.
OSWALD THOMPSON.	CHARLES MACALESTER.
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JOHN S. RIDDLE.	HENRY D. GILPIN.
ISAAC HAZLEHURST.	FREDERICK BROWN.

PHILADELPHIA, November 29, 1852.

GENTLEMEN :—

I thank you sincerely for your very kind note, requesting for publication a copy of my discourse on the life and character of Daniel Webster, and have pleasure in placing the manuscript at your disposal.

I remain, Gentlemen,

With great respect,

Your friend and servant,

H. A. BOARDMAN.

To the HON. ROBERT C. GRIER,

HON. CHARLES GILPIN,

HON. JOHN K. KANE,

HON. GEORGE SHARSWOOD,

HON. OSWALD THOMPSON,

JOHN A. BROWN, Esq.,

And others.

DISCOURSE.

I CANNOT bring myself to believe that the theme which is now engrossing all minds, should be excluded from the pulpit. We are a smitten nation. The symbols of mourning meet the eye in our crowded cities, in our tranquil villages, in the remotest hamlets of the mountains. "A great man has fallen in Israel!" God has taken from us "*the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the eloquent orator.*" If such a man is one of the choicest earthly gifts heaven can bestow upon a people, his removal may well be regarded as one of their greatest bereavements. We are admonished that the fall of a sparrow has its lesson of instruction for us. How inexcusable would it be, should we treat an event like *this* with indifference.

Yet while I recognise the duty upon which I am entering, I shrink from it. I have no hope of conveying to your minds my own sense of the magnitude of our loss. Still less can I expect to elude the strictures of those who entertain what may, perhaps, be styled the popular view of the legitimate sphere of the pulpit. But I am pressed with the feeling that I *must*, as a Pastor, in some way improve this dispensation : that

without attempting a formal eulogy on Mr. Webster, which would be in the highest degree presumptuous, I must here record my sense of the invaluable services he has rendered to our common country and our common Christianity, and so endeavour to turn the emotions of sorrow which fill our hearts, to some useful account. If I can do nothing more, I must be allowed to cast a single flower, however transitory, upon his grave.

Many eloquent tongues have already been employed in celebrating Mr. Webster's character and achievements. The most distinguished men of the leading political parties have vied with each other in doing homage to his intellectual greatness, his patriotism, and his private virtues. In respect to the first of these characteristics, he has long been without a rival, the acknowledged head and crown of this nation. A mind like his is a wonderful creation—adapted beyond the sublimest exertions of the Divine power and wisdom in the physical world, to inspire reverential and adoring views of the moral perfections of the Deity. Its essential elements were comprehension, strength, sagacity, and symmetry. Colossal in its proportions, it was nevertheless so well poised that it awakened admiration no less by the harmony of its movements than by the grandeur of its several parts. The original structure of his intellect conspired with the whole current of his training, to define the mission on which Providence had sent him into the world. No other revelation was needed to show that the SCIENCE OF GO-

VERNMENT was to be the proper study of his life, and that he was ultimately, should he be spared, to take his place among that honourable assemblage—comprising, at the end of six thousand years, but a very small number of names—whom the world reveres as Philosophic Statesmen. If we except the great New England Metaphysician and Divine of the last century, Jonathan Edwards, our own country has produced but one mind comparable, in the qualities just noted, to his own; and that, by an inscrutable Providence, was doomed to a violent extinction just when it had reached the full maturity of its powers. It is the record of history, that Alexander Hamilton* was “numbered among statesmen at an age when in others the rudiments of character are scarcely visible;” and that “America saw with astonishment a lad of seventeen in the rank of her advocates, at a time when her advocates were patriots and sages.” Mr. Webster himself once beautifully said of him, “He smote the rock of the national resources, and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of the public credit, and it sprung upon its feet. The fabled birth of Minerva from the brain of Jove, was hardly more sudden or more perfect than the financial system of the United States burst from the conceptions of Alexander Hamilton.” If the genius of Webster was not signalized by so precocious a development, it was marked by no less vigour and versatility, and re-

* We may fairly claim Hamilton as an American, although he was a native of the small island of Nevis, in the West Indies.

sembled it in the rare and happy union of a capacity for the largest generalization, with the utmost patience and penetration in the analysis of details. Like Hamilton, too, he was great in the Senate and at the Bar; his equal as a statesman, certainly not his inferior as an advocate. It has fallen to the lot of but a very few men in either hemisphere to achieve an equal distinction in these two fields at the same time. Mr. Pitt and his illustrious antagonist, Fox, were pre-eminent as parliamentary debaters; but politics left them neither time nor inclination for legal practice. Fox, however, is said to have excited the astonishment and admiration of the judges in arguing questions of law on the trial of Warren Hastings. Erskine, the most eloquent and successful barrister known to the British Bar, had but a second or third rate rank in the House of Commons. But of Webster it was well said by one of the leading members of our Bar, at the late town-meeting, "while the deep tones and the rich volumes of his voice were still almost echoing in the councils of the nation, they were again heard in forensic splendour in the highest judicial courts of the nation."*

It is a remarkable and striking fact, that the superiority here claimed for him should have been conceded by all his contemporaries. Among the resolutions adopted by the New York Bar, on the occasion of his death, was the following:

"Resolved, That in the large capacities and varied powers of his intellect, in the culture and discipline of

* Josiah Randall, Esq.

these powers in the highest sphere of human action and influence, in the fortune of great opportunities and the success of great achievements, Daniel Webster stands *first* among the men of his day and generation, and his name and his fame will be a treasured possession to his country for ever."

This is not an empty posthumous compliment. It was the feeling, the universal feeling, during his life. In whatsoever part of the Republic, on whatever theatre, he was "*primus inter pares*," the acknowledged chief. On the floor of the Senate, before the tribunals of justice, at public festivals or political convocations,

"He above the rest,
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower."

No one divided the primacy with him. No one contested it. No one seemed even to envy it. His very presence inspired respect. "It was enough (to borrow the words of an accomplished English nobleman* who visited our country two years ago) to look on his jutting dark brow and cavernous eyes, and massive forehead, to be assured that they were the abode of as much, if not more, intellectual power than any head you perhaps ever remarked." And when he spoke, the ample promise of his majestic appearance was redeemed. You found yourself listening to a consummate orator. Scorning the trickery of mere

* The Earl of Carlisle.

declamation, he gave himself to the question in hand with a dignity and earnestness of manner, an affluence and precision of language, a compactness and cogency of reasoning, and a fertility of illustration, which never failed to rivet the attention, rarely to carry conviction to the heart. A master of the English tongue, the simplicity of his diction and the purity of his style, made him intelligible to persons of every class. Nor was it possible to listen to him without being instructed. Even in his familiar conversation you were made to feel that his mind revolved in a sphere above that occupied by ordinary men. And whatever the subject on which he spoke, you were certain to hear something worth carrying away.

It is only an expansion of the topic we have been dwelling upon, to observe that Mr. Webster could speak to the country with an *authority* which belonged to none of his eminent associates. This was not the result of any assumed superiority. It was not derived from official station, for it was equally marked during the intervals of his retirement, as when he was in the Senate or the Cabinet, as decisive at Marshfield as at Washington. It was the spontaneous tribute of his fellow-citizens of all parties to his great abilities, his wisdom, and his known devotion to the Union. Whenever a cloud came down upon our foreign relations, or a threatening crisis approached in our domestic affairs, the nation turned, as by a sort of common instinct, to Mr. Webster. There was no man

whose opinions at such junctures there was so great a desire to learn ; none whose utterances produced so decisive an effect upon the finance and commerce of the country. A few words from him, whether of distrust or of hopefulness, would tell upon every share of stock in Wall Street, upon every cargo of flour at Detroit, and every shipload of cotton at New Orleans. The country knew that he was, beyond any other man, conversant with all its interests and relations ; that he never spoke what he did not fully believe ; and that his words were words of careful deliberation. They relied upon his truthfulness, and this, combined with his extraordinary abilities, was a tower of strength to him. There are able and truthful men who survive him ; but it is no disparagement to them to say, that there is no man living who can stand up and speak to the American people as Daniel Webster could, or whose opinions will be sought for in great emergencies, as his were.

There was a reason for the confidence which the country at large reposed in him, paramount even to the admiration in which all classes held his transcendent abilities. Mr. Webster belonged to the whole country. He was no local politician. He was no mere party man. New Hampshire might boast of the small, one-story farm-house in which he was born. Massachusetts might glory in having him as one of her adopted sons. But he was no man of Massachusetts—no man of New Hampshire,—he was an American. He had of course his geographical ties and

associations; but Warwickshire might as well attempt to monopolise William Shakspeare, or Lincolnshire Sir Isaac Newton, as for any one of our commonwealths to challenge for itself the name and fame of Daniel Webster. His true position was that assigned him in a sentiment offered at a public dinner some eighteen months ago: "The Constitution, and its greatest Expounder—the Union, and its ablest Defender." With a single exception, these are the most honourable titles known to American history; and by so indissoluble a tie has the gratitude of his countrymen bound them to his name, that they will go down to posterity with as definitive an application as that which attaches to the "Father of his Country." It is not intended by this language that Mr. Webster was not allied to a party, nor that he did not in his place advocate party measures. But he was not, and, by the necessity of his nature, he could not be a strict party man. Like Burke, whom he resembled in several particulars (his devotion to agriculture among the rest), he was a statesman as distinguished from a politician. And this, if traced to its results, may help to explain why, like Burke, also, he was never (*if we are to believe everything we hear*) a popular favourite. If this was a fact, it was because he was too great to be popular. He would not stoop to pamper the vanity and inflame the prejudices of the people. He despised the intrigue and cajolery by which small men and bad men so often rise to power. He was not a man to be bought and sold at the shambles. If the mea-

sures of an administration to which he was generally opposed met his approval, he had the rare independence and magnanimity to support them; and some of his ablest speeches were made on occasions of this kind. The triumph of party was not the end he lived for. Government was with him not a paltry game of "*Who wins and who loses*," but a divine institution, ordained for the most beneficent objects, and essentially connected with the highest happiness of individuals, and the substantial improvement of states. In his view, the problems involved in administration are among the most profound, as its functions are among the most important, which can engage the attention of the human intellect. And it is easy to imagine the secret loathing with which he must have seen these momentous interests made, as they constantly are, the sport of the vilest passions, and degraded to be the very footballs of rival demagogues.

The special subject to which he applied his powers, was the Constitution of his country. You shall have his own statement on this point :

"Gentlemen, to be serious, my life has been a life of severe labour in my profession, and all the portion I could spare of that labour, from the support of my family and myself, has been devoted to the consideration of subjects connected with the general history of the country—the Constitution of the country—the confederation out of which the Constitution arose—all the history of all the Congresses which have assembled before and since the formation of that

Constitution—and, in short, if I have learned anything, or know anything—and I agree it is very little—what I do know and what I do understand, so far as I understand anything, is the Constitution of the United States, the history of its formation, and the history of its administration under General Washington, and from that time down to this.”*

It is not too much to say of Mr. Webster, that he surpassed all the men of his generation in his minute familiarity with everything pertaining to the origin and working of our republican charters, and in the profound and varied knowledge, the masculine logic, and the lofty eloquence he brought to the exposition and establishment of them. “The key to his whole political course is the belief that when the Union is dissolved, the internal peace, the vigorous growth, and the prosperity of the States, and the welfare of their inhabitants, are blighted for ever; and that, while the Union endures, all else of trial and calamity which can befall a nation may be remedied or borne.”† His feeling on this subject was so much like that of the immortal statesman with whom he has already been compared, that with two or three slight alterations, a passage applied by his eloquent eulogist to Hamilton, might be readily taken as designed for Webster.

“He reserved himself for crises which he feared are approaching; such crises, especially, as may affect the

* Speech at Syracuse, New York, May 26th, 1851.

† Mr. Everett.

integrity of the Union. How he was alarmed by everything which pointed at its dissolution; how indignant were his feelings and language on that ungracious topic; how stern and steady his hostility to every influence which only leaned toward the project, they will attest with whom he was in habits of communication. In every shape it encountered his reprobation, as unworthy of a statesman, as fatal to America, and desirable to the desperate alone. One of his primary objects was to consolidate the efforts of good men in retarding a calamity which, after all, they may be unable to avert; but which no partial nor temporary policy should induce them to accelerate. To these sentiments must be traced his hatred to continental factions; his anxiety for the federal constitution, although, in his judgment, too slight for the pressure which it has to sustain; his horror of every attempt to sap its foundation or loosen its fabric; his zeal to consecrate it in the affections of his fellow-citizens, that, if it fall at last, they may be pure from the guilt of its overthrow—an overthrow which may be accomplished in an hour, but of which the woes may be entailed upon ages to come.”*

How much his deep solicitude for the Union gave tone and character to Mr. Webster’s life and labours, must be known wherever his name is mentioned. The impress of it is upon all his speeches—his funeral eulogies—his great legal arguments. It might even

* Dr. Mason’s Oration before the Cincinnati, in New York, July 31st, 1804.

be detected in the rich tissue of his ordinary conversation. You could almost read it in his majestic brow, and his large lustrous, piercing eye.* Such had been the course of events that his very presence suggested the idea of the Union. When men saw him, their first thought was of the Constitution; and there went forth from every breast a spontaneous tribute of veneration and gratitude toward the man who had been so instrumental, under Providence, in preserving intact the framework of our unrivalled government.†

Nor has the extent of our obligations to him been overrated. It was his fortune to live at a most interesting and critical period of our history. He com-

* The author of the pamphlet entitled, "Personal Memorials of Daniel Webster," (Lippincott, Grambo & Co.,) mentions that he once questioned Mr. Webster as to his personal appearance when a school-master in Maine. His reply was, "Long, slender, pale, and all eyes; indeed, I went by the name of '*All Eyes*,' the country round."

† In one of his addresses just quoted, he observed that it so happened that all his public services had been rendered to the General Government. But, correcting the statement, he mentioned a single exception. "I was," said he, "for ten days, a member of the Massachusetts Legislature, and I turned my thoughts to the search of some good object in which I could be useful in that position; and after much reflection, I introduced a bill, which, with the general consent of both houses of the Massachusetts Legislature, passed into a law, and is now a law of the State, which enacts that no man in the State shall *catch trout* in any other manner than with the ordinary hook and line. With that exception, I never was connected for an hour with any State government in my life."

menced his life almost simultaneously with our Constitution, having been a boy of only five years old when the Convention which formed it assembled in this city. The difficulties and dangers which gathered around the infancy of the government, and threatened its early subversion, had been happily surmounted before he reached his maturity; but questions of the gravest import, and fraught with momentous consequences to the country, arose from time to time during the entire period of his public career. These were not simply matters of policy and expediency, like the tariff, the bank, the public lands, and other legislative measures, which he discussed with his usual ability; but questions underlying all legislation, and affecting the fundamental law on which our institutions rest. It was a new government; new, not simply as a chronological fact, but in many of the essential principles which entered into its structure. History recorded no precedent for it. The world had seen nothing like it. It had required all the influence of Washington and his associates, and all the erudition, acumen, and patriotism of the authors of the "Federalist," and other distinguished writers and orators, to win the consent of the different States to a federal Union. And when the Union was once formed, the delicate relations of the general and the state governments became, as they still are, a source of embarrassment and controversy. It was a question of this sort on which Mr. Webster made his maiden

speech before the Supreme Court of the United States* —the celebrated Dartmouth College case. Of his argument on that occasion, it has been observed: "The logic and the law were rendered irresistible. But as he advanced, his heart warmed to the subject and the occasion. Thoughts and feelings that had grown old with his best affections, rose unbidden to his lips. He remembered that the institution he was defending was one where his own youth had been nurtured; and the moral tenderness and beauty this gave to the grandeur of his thoughts, the sort of religious sensibility it imparted to his urgent appeals and demands for the stern fulfilment of what law and justice required, wrought up the whole audience to an extraordinary state of excitement. Many betrayed strong agitation, many were dissolved in tears. Prominent among them was that eminent lawyer and statesman, Robert Goodloe Harper, who came to him when he resumed his seat, evincing emotions of the highest gratification. When he ceased to speak, there was a perceptible interval before any one was willing to break the silence; and when that vast crowd separated, not one person of the whole number doubted that the man who had that day so moved, astonished, and controlled them, had vindicated for himself a place at the side of the first jurists of the country."†

Such was the auspicious dawn of his brilliant career as an expounder of the Constitution. In subse-

* A.D. 1818, in his thirty-seventh year.

† Mr. Ticknor, quoted by Everett.

quent years still greater questions gave occasion to still greater efforts. Political heresies of the most startling character, such as no opposer of the federal compact had breathed in the earlier days of the Republic, were propagated under the sanction of distinguished names, and found able and eloquent champions within the walls of the Capitol. Principles were propounded respecting the sovereignty of the states, which, if carried out, would have turned the bonds which hold the Union together into withs of straw, and left this glorious fabric to fall to pieces, like the early republics, a prey to intestine feuds. The merciful Providence that had brought us through so many other perils, did not abandon us in this hour of our extremity. A man was found equal to the crisis. He knew that it was a crisis. He formed a just estimate of the grandeur of the occasion. It was in his view an issue of no less solemnity than whether this august Union was to be maintained and perpetuated, or broken up into a group of petty rival confederacies; whether this beautiful land was still to be the abode of peace and plenty, intelligence and piety, with the freest, the happiest, and the most improving population on the globe, or to be given over to the manifold horrors of a violent dismemberment, and ultimately to the yet greater horrors of a fratricidal war; whether the oppressed nations were still to draw encouragement and hope from the spectacle of a great people rising to an unexampled pitch of prosperity and renown, under the influence of free institutions, or to see the last hope of constitutional liberty

extinguished, and the whole globe covered again with the black pall of despotism. Such were the issues involved in the sublime contest to which he was called. Rarely in the course of human events has one man had so vast a burden laid upon him. Never did a man acquit himself in a great crisis more triumphantly. It is not my province to rehearse the details of that day's* achievement. It is still fresh in your memories. The fame of it is a part, and no trivial part of our country's glory. While the Union lasts, that speech will continue to be cited as one of the noblest efforts—perhaps the very noblest—of modern eloquence. And should this Republic hereafter yield to the destiny of all human organizations and crumble into ruins, the oblivion that sweeps away our cities, our fortresses, and our charters, will leave WEBSTER'S REPLY TO HAYNE to be read and admired by distant generations as a memento of our greatness, no less indestructible than the monuments which Greece and Rome have respectively in the Philippics of Demosthenes and the orations of Cicero against Cataline.

I have dwelt on this speech because of the pre-eminence which is commonly assigned to it among Mr. Webster's oratorical efforts. And yet three years afterwards he made a speech, of which one of our most eminent jurists,† whose name is never pronounced but with reverence, said, in writing to him, "I had just

* January 26, 1830. ,

† The late Chancellor Kent.

finished the rapturous perusal of your speech on the Protest, as appearing in the *Intelligencer* of Saturday, when I had the pleasure of receiving it from you in a pamphlet form. I never had a greater treat than the reading of that speech, this morning. You never equalled this effort. It surpasses everything in logic—in simplicity, and beauty, and energy of diction—in clearness—in rebuke—in sarcasm—in patriotic and glowing feelings—in just and profound constitutional views—in critical severity and matchless strength. It is worth millions to our liberties.”

There is still another speech, too memorable to be passed over in this connexion, but too recent to require more than a brief reference. We are now very much in the condition of a ship, which, after encountering a terrific and protracted storm, emerges at length into a tranquil sea, the heavens so serene, the air so bland, the sense of security so perfect, that all the peril and anxiety of the hurricane are as though they had never been. It is difficult to realize as we look abroad over our peaceful and smiling land, and see the various tribes which compose our population dwelling together in unity—no discontent, no alienation, no local jealousies, no political controversies of sufficient moment to occasion the slightest solicitude—that three years have not gone by since the whole country was convulsed for months together with angry discussions which imperilled the very existence of the Union. It was no false alarm, no cry of women and children, which startled the nation. It seemed as though all

the fountains of sectional bigotry had been broken up ; as though the accumulated resentments of a half century had burst forth with unheard-of fury, and poured themselves upon the ship of state with a violence which threatened to "push from its moorings the sacred ark of the common safety, and to drive this gallant vessel, freighted with everything dear to an American bosom, upon the rocks, or lay it a sheer hulk upon the ocean."* It was an emergency which appealed with irresistible pathos and energy to the patriotism of the country. And the appeal was not in vain. Our sanctuaries listened to unwonted and importunate prayer for the perpetuity of our beloved Union. Statesmen of all parties, suspending for the time their minor differences, hastened with a common loyalty to the succour of their common country. The people in their might and majesty assembled to deliberate on the crisis. And the mandate went up to the Capitol from millions of voices, like the sound of many waters, that THE UNION MUST AND SHOULD BE PRESERVED. But this sublime movement of the people was itself no less an effect than a cause. Its mainspring was at Washington. The Senate-chamber was again the battle-field on which this great contest was to be decided. And it was, for the second time, the high honour of Mr. Webster to strike the decisive blow for the integrity of the Union. Other men there were, his illustrious peers, both in and out of Congress, who contributed in no mean degree to bring about the propitious result.

* William Pinkney—on the Missouri Question.

But such were the complications of parties, and such his personal antecedents and existing affinities, not to add, such his thorough comprehension of every one of the pregnant questions involved in the controversy, that to him, more perhaps than to any other individual, was assigned the responsibility of determining the final issue. He accepted the trust, and planted himself in the breach. "The imprisoned winds," said he in the solemn exordium of his memorable speech on that occasion,* "are let loose. The East, the North, and the stormy South, combine to throw the whole ocean into commotion, to toss its billows to the skies and disclose its profoundest depths. I do not affect to regard myself, Mr. President, as holding, or as fit to hold, the helm in this combat with the political elements; but I have a duty to perform, and I mean to perform it with fidelity, not without a sense of existing dangers, but not without hope." Addressing himself to the difficult and perilous task in this spirit, he took up the debated topics, now twisted and matted into a Gordian knot, and resolved the tangled mass, not by cutting, but by untying it. One by one the vexed questions were drawn out, defined, and adjusted to each other, until at length a platform was constructed, honourable to the North, honourable to the South, and true to the Constitution, where men of all types might sit down under the shadow of the Union and smoke the calumet. It would be too much to say that this speech restored the country to tran-

* March 7, 1850.

quillity. But the country instantly began to breathe more freely. There was a sort of feeling that Daniel Webster was a safe guide; and that if *he* had found a path through this morass, it must be solid footing for those who chose to follow him. In the end, after months of agitation, which gave occasion to many of our ablest statesmen to signalize their devotion to the Union, the great mass of the people did follow him. By the favour of a merciful Providence, the Union was not only preserved, but cemented.

It were a curious speculation, what would have been the probable result had Mr. Webster thrown himself, at this juncture, into the opposite scale; had he, instead of advising mutual conciliation and concession, taken ground boldly against the Compromise, and employed his great powers in resisting that adjustment. We have no warrant for maintaining that even this would have defeated the arrangement in question; but he knows little of the weight which Mr. Webster's name carried with it, who can doubt that it would have multiplied the obstructions to a settlement a hundred-fold. The people of this country, as a body, are not politicians. And throughout all the States north of the Potomac, there were tens of thousands of quiet, industrious citizens, who, irrespective of party ties, were disposed to acquiesce in Mr. Webster's opinions on all questions properly national. Had his voice gone forth at this crisis—"These measures are unjust to the North; they are subversive of the Constitution; they are unrighteous and oppres-

sive,"—the whole country, North and South, would have reeled with excitement, and all the previous agitation would have been but as the tremor which precedes the earthquake. We cannot doubt, it would be an ungrateful distrust of the benign Providence that has always protected us, to doubt, that even with this opposition, the nation as a body would ultimately have been conducted to some amicable solution of the difficulty. But had his influence been cast into the adverse scale, the quivering beam would have held the nation in *long* and intolerable suspense. From this trial the patriotism and fortitude of Mr. Webster saved us. It was a service calculated to put both these qualities to the test; but he was never found wanting where the Union was concerned. In referring to this occasion more than a year afterwards, he said,* "I thought it my duty to pursue this course, and I did not care what was to be the consequence. I felt it was my duty in a very alarming crisis, to come out; to go for my country and my whole country; and to exert any power I had, to keep that country together. I cared for nothing, I was afraid of nothing, but I meant to do my duty. Duty performed makes a man happy; duty neglected makes a man unhappy. I, therefore, in the face of all discouragements and all dangers, was ready to go forth and do what I thought my country—your country—demanded of me. And, gentlemen, allow me to say here to-day, that if the fate of John Rogers had stared

* At Buffalo.

me in the face, if I had seen the stake, if I had heard the faggots already crackling, by the blessing of Almighty God, I would have gone on and discharged the duty which I thought my country called upon me to perform. I would have become a martyr to save that country."

Such power over men as this great orator displayed on this and other occasions, is a godlike endowment; and according to the principles by which it is controlled, will it spread light and joy over a land, or convert it into a scene of devastation. They are blessed indeed, who have grace given them to use such an endowment for the good of mankind; and with what terrific fury will retributive justice avenge itself upon the men who prostitute these high gifts to purposes of evil.

The closing sentence of the letter of Chancellor Kent, quoted a few moments ago, contains a thought that should be noted. "Your speech *is worth millions to our liberties.*" The great battles of freedom are oftener fought in the Senate than in the field. Mr. Webster's life was consecrated to the cause of enlightened, constitutional liberty. He might have adopted as his own the motto of the great Selden, *περί παντός την ελευθερίαν*: (above all things, liberty.) In those elaborate arguments which enchained by turns an applauding Senate and an admiring Court, he was strengthening the foundations of our political edifice, and making it a safer and more comfortable home for the millions who have sought a shelter in it. All his

sympathies were on the side of freedom and intelligent progress: for it was not the least of his merits that he eluded the common fault of superior minds employed in the more recondite branches of jurisprudence, or subjected to the capricious criticisms of the popular voice. Such men are apt to become conservative to an excess. They value law more than justice. They distrust and dread the people. They are jealous of enlarging their political franchises. They look with complacency upon a *strong* government, and read nothing but danger in the effervescence and tumult of popular gatherings, where the masses meet to do their own business in their own way. No man had clearer or sounder conceptions than this eminent statesman, of the essential conditions of national freedom. He well knew that self-government was one of the highest and most difficult functions, whether for individuals or for nations. He never countenanced, therefore, that delusive and fatal radicalism, which would cast all the thrones of Christendom, and those who sit upon them, into one great bonfire, and replace them with democratic charters. But while he recognised the need of some preparatory training as indispensable to the success of republican institutions, he was inexorably opposed to all the maxims and traditions of arbitrary rule, and ever ready to employ his argumentative and luminous eloquence in cheering on nations which were struggling for their independence. Of this we have two remarkable illustrations in his speeches on the Greek

Revolution and the Panama Mission. The generous sentiments so worthy of a statesman, and especially of an American statesman, which pervade these, and indeed, all his speeches, characterize also his diplomatic papers. They are impressed on every page of that remarkable document, in allusion to which one of our own distinguished citizens, who recently adorned the second office in the Republic, so felicitously said at the late town-meeting, "Two years have not elapsed since Mr. Webster's pungent, powerful, and patriotic letter to Mr. Hulsemann resounded like the roar of ordnance throughout Europe." The Cabinets of the other hemisphere were left in no uncertainty as to the ground on which our Secretary, and the government he represented, stood. And it was a solace to the continental nations to hear their oppressors rebuked by one, who, spurning the courtly dialect in which ministers and ambassadors are accustomed to disguise their real sentiments, dared to tell them in plain, unvarnished Saxon words, which startled the whole realm of diplomacy, that America would not permit any foreign interference in her affairs; that while they abstained from any intervention in the conflicts of Europe, "the government and people of the United States could not remain indifferent spectators when they beheld the people of foreign countries spontaneously moving towards the adoption of institutions like their own;" and that "nothing should deter them from exercising, at their own discretion, the rights belonging to them as an independent nation,

and of forming and expressing their own opinions freely, and at all times, upon the great political events which may transpire among the civilized nations of the earth."

Happily for Mr. Webster's fame and for his country, a new edition of his works, edited by a distinguished personal friend (now his successor in the Cabinet), was published under his own eye, but a few months before his death. With the exception of his diplomatic papers, the matter contained in these six volumes, has all been spoken, and yet it savours as little of the character of mere speech-making, as any collection of orations or addresses in the language. It is the most valuable contribution which has been made to our political literature since the era of the Federalist; and no professional library will hereafter be deemed complete without it. It was the singular merit of Mr. Webster, that he was able to embellish the most profound disquisitions in political science with elegant and various learning, and to enshrine them in a brilliant and majestic eloquence. The orator has passed away, but the patriot—the statesman—the sage—is immortal. Open his works at random, and you will instantly feel yourself to be in communion with a master-mind. Nearly all the important events in our history—the origin and essential attributes of our federal and state governments, the delicate questions growing out of the expansion of our territory and the accession of new states, the proper limitations of the powers vested in the three depart-

ments of the government, the conduct of our foreign relations, the services of the founders of the Republic, education, the mechanic arts, agriculture, Christianity as the indispensable basis of free institutions—these are among the subjects he has discussed, and discussed in such a way that he appears equally at home with them all. Every theme to which he applies his imperial intellect, becomes transparent. Touched by his wand, the most chaotic mass of materials is reduced to intelligible forms. Complex details are classified. Principles take the place of sophisms. Declamation gives way to argument. Precedents are sifted to their last analysis. Consequences are portrayed with prophetic sagacity. Objections are refuted. One stronghold of error after another is demolished. And you follow on wherever the great orator leads the way, not because he has so fascinated you with the sorcery of his eloquence, that you are no longer a responsible agent, but because your reason is satisfied, and you have the witness within yourself that it is truth, not victory, at which he is aiming. Fascinated, indeed, you may be. Who could be otherwise in perusing those admirable performances in which there is so much to gratify the taste, to enkindle pure and generous emotions, to expand the mental vision, and inspire the soul with a profounder consciousness of its intrinsic dignity and its large capacities. And yet, in all and above all, it is your reason which is addressed and convinced. Mr. Webster never fell into the error of degrading his audience beneath the proper level of hu-

manity, and treating them as though they were creatures of mere sensibility or mere fancy, who cared only to be excited or amused. Whether it is before a crowded Senate or a Mechanics' Institute, before the first legal tribunal of the country, or a heterogeneous mass-meeting, assembled from the palaces and the workshops of a large city, he never forgets that he is a man himself and is speaking to men. He reverences, as every man who presumes to address his fellow-men in public or through the press, ought to reverence, the human understanding. He takes it for granted that you want to be reasoned with; that nothing will satisfy you but truth and argument; and that to attempt to put you off, when you are eager to have some great problem of national policy or personal duty resolved, with a bouquet of tropes or a quiver of invectives, would be like mocking an exhausted and gasping caravan in the desert, by rehearsing to them the tales in the Arabian Nights Entertainments. A few introductory words of courtesy there may be, and then for the argument. And with such fairness and logical fidelity does he pursue the argument—clothing it with a diction so plain as to be intelligible to the humblest capacity, and so beautiful as to satisfy the most critical taste—that if you go along with him at all, as you will be pretty likely to do, it will be because you feel at every step that you have firm ground under your feet, and know what you are about just as well as you do when treading the familiar rounds of your daily avocation.

This, in fact, is one of the characteristics of Mr. Webster's speeches which warrant us in predicting that they will be as imperishable as anything in our literature. They are full of important *truth*, expressed in a manner which everybody can understand. We may say of him what a profound critic has said of Mr. Fox: "For ourselves, we think we never heard any man who dismissed us from the argument on a debated topic, with such a feeling of satisfied and final conviction, or such a competence to tell why we were convinced. There was, in the view in which subjects were placed by him, something like the daylight, that simple clearness which makes things conspicuous and does not make them glare, which adds no colour or form, but purely makes visible in perfection the real colour and form of all things round; a kind of light, less amusing than that of magnificent lustres, or a thousand coloured lamps, and less fascinating and romantic than that of the moon; but which is immeasurably preferred when we are bent on sober business, and not at leisure, or not in the disposition to wander delighted among beautiful shadows and delusions. It is needless to say that he possessed, in a high degree, wit and fancy; but superlative intellect was the grand distinction of his eloquence; the pure force of sense, of plain, downright sense, was so great that it would have given a character of sublimity to his eloquence, even if it had never once been aided by a happy image or a brilliant explosion. The grandeur of plain sense,

would not have been deemed an absurd phrase, by any man who had heard one of his best speeches."

When to these considerations it is added, that the great questions discussed by Mr. Webster, can never cease to have their importance while our institutions last, we may assert with confidence, that his writings will become an indispensable text-book in the training of our future civilians. "I shall take care," said Lord Erskine, "to put the works of Mr. Burke into the hands of those whose principles are left to my formation." With the same feeling, many an American citizen will place Mr. Webster's works in the hands of his sons. What better service, indeed, so far as their secular education is concerned, could we render them? Where could they find a richer repository of sound political maxims, of lucid and comprehensive views concerning our national rights and duties, and of masterly disquisitions in constitutional jurisprudence? What writings would do more to make them thinkers and reasoners; to form them to a large and just estimate of their social and civil responsibilities; to raise them above the littlenesses of sectional prejudice, and put the stamp of a broad nationality upon their patriotism; to show them that whatever use political parties may choose to make of their honours, and to whomsoever they may see fit to vote a triumph, a truly great mind, animated by virtuous sentiments and embracing the whole country within the wide sweep of its affections, can achieve for itself a reputation which no party-idolatry could confer, and no party-

malignity annul; to stimulate them to seek, not the "empty blast of popular favour or the applause of a giddy multitude," but that "true glory," which, according to the prince of Roman orators, consists "in a wide and illustrious fame of many and great benefits conferred upon our friends, our country, or the whole race of mankind;"* and to impress it deeply upon their minds, that "if we and our posterity shall be true to the Christian religion, if we and they shall live always in the fear of God, and shall respect his commandments, if we and they shall maintain just moral sentiments, and such conscientious convictions of duty as shall control the heart and life, we may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country; . . . but if we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us, that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity."† These are among the lessons which our young men may derive from the careful study of the works of Mr. Webster; and no wise father would willingly deprive his sons of the benefit of them.

The importance of the subject may justify us in dwelling a little longer on one of the points just indicated—the value to be attached to the life and writings

* Oration for Marcellus.

† Mr. Webster's Address before the New York Historical Society.

of this great publicist, as an auxiliary in the training of our future statesmen. There are able men amongst us whose faith in the permanency of the Union appears to be nearly as firm as their confidence in the stability of the solar system. We may certainly congratulate ourselves that, through the favour of Divine Providence, our complex and beautiful scheme of government has maintained its integrity against all the assaults hitherto made upon it. But we have had warnings enough to admonish us against a blind self-confidence. Our own experience forbids us to look for any exemption from those intestine broils and commotions with which all other nations have been agitated. In a country of such vast extent, increasing in population and resources with a rapidity which makes a new atlas necessary every five years, with the utmost diversity of climate and productions, conflicting sectional interests, commercial and diplomatic relations spread all over the globe, thirty-one jealous and powerful state governments closely interlocked with a grand central administration, and sensitive to the slightest apparent invasion of their sovereignty, and twenty-five millions of people animated by an energetic, if it must not be said, an aggressive, *Caucasian* spirit,—in such a country, occasions for discord and alienation can never be wanting, if there are individuals at hand whose interest it is to find or create them. To provide for these emergencies, and as far as possible prevent or mitigate them, we must look well to the education, mental and moral, of our youth. The church and the school-

house—the Bible enthroned in both—must be, under God, our first reliance. Next to this, we need statesmen like him we have lost, and like some who survive him. The ambition of ordinary minds cannot soar to this elevation. Nor can the most generous intellects attain it without encountering hostile influences, which are generated by the natural working of our institutions. Where office depends on the popular voice, the representative will find himself under a powerful temptation to merge all other political obligations in his supposed duty to his immediate constituency. The claims of his district will take precedence over those of his state; and loyalty to his state will be stronger than his loyalty to the general government. Nor is this the only adverse agency to be met. A despotism may flourish without parties; for the dead are always still; but no free government has ever got on without them. In itself this is an advantage; but the practical tendency of it is to dwarf men into partisans. They are apt to sink both their individuality and their patriotism in servility to a party, and to employ those powers which should have been dedicated to their country, in the miserable contests of factions and sections.

Here, precisely, in the ability of a man to rise above these local and party affinities—to frame his views of truth and duty on a large and candid survey of things, and then to follow out his convictions irrespective of personal consequences—lies one of the essential *insignia* of the genuine patriot and states-

man, which distinguish him from the mere pretender. "A public man has no occasion to be embarrassed, if he is honest. Himself and his feelings should be to him as nobody and as nothing; the interest of his country must be to him as everything; he must sink what is personal to himself, making exertions for his country; and it is his ability and readiness to do this which are to mark him as a great or a little man in all time to come."* This test, it must be admitted, is a very severe one. The moral courage and self-immolation it demands are alien from all the natural instincts of the human breast; and if political honours and emoluments alone are regarded, this exalted kind of patriotism will find but too little to nourish it in the annals of our race. It is for this very reason we should seize upon every means which *is* placed within our reach, to foster and diffuse it. And in this view, what a legacy has the Republic received in the example and the writings of Daniel Webster. Without challenging for this eminent man a moral perfection which his warmest friends have never claimed for him, it may be questioned whether the country will not yet reap from his services even greater advantages than those he conferred upon her while living. *There* is his public career—a study for the youth of America in all coming time. The career of a patriot-statesman, impressed throughout with characters of light and truth; not like a huge meteor flashing fantastic fires, and startling the nations with its eccentric

* Mr. Webster's speech at Faneuil Hall, September 30th, 1842.

motions, but like a mountain stream, swelling by degrees into a broad, majestic river, spreading fertility along its banks, lending beauty to the landscape, ministering health and comfort and prosperity to numerous populations, and bearing on its tranquil bosom the products of many climes and countries. Is not such a career a substantial addition to the moral wealth of the nation? Is it not a source of strength to every father who would imbue his sons with an intelligent and comprehensive love of country; to every patriot who would extinguish, as often as they reappear, the flames of sectional jealousy; to every constituency that may be exposed to the arts of aspiring demagogues; to the teachers of religion who value our institutions as well for their connexion with a pure Christianity, as for their secular benefits; and to the throng of young men always ready to launch away into the rough sea of politics, who would fain adopt, before starting, some wise and just principles which might conduct them to an honourable, if not a speedy, fame? One thing, at least, must be conceded. Mr. Webster has made it more difficult than it ever was before, to break the Union to pieces. And that, not simply by his masterly exposition of the Constitution, but by the whole influence which attached to his name while living, and which now attaches to his memory. It *must* tell with power upon the country for generations to come, that he, by common consent, the first American jurist, orator, and statesman of his day, was one who, throughout

his long and brilliant career, looked steadfastly to the prosperity of the *whole* country ; that he endeavoured to allay all sectional bickerings, and to suppress the misrepresentations and calumnies which engender them ; that by his speeches and writings he sought to make the different portions of the confederacy better acquainted with each other, and thus to abate their mutual antipathies ; that he scorned the selfish provincial ambition which would use the passions and prejudices of well-meaning but misguided people, as a ladder to mount to place and power ; that neither wholesale slander from a venal press, nor the threatened displeasure of his own commonwealth, could deter him from any step which he believed to be essential to the welfare of the Union ; that no earthly consideration could tempt him to swerve from his devotion to the Constitution, “the only bulwark of our liberties and of our national character ;” that at a great crisis of our affairs, when the surges of Northern fanaticism and of Southern disunionism broke over him, as he stood up in the Senate-chamber, with a simultaneous and common fury, the only effect upon him was to make him grasp the South and the North with a firmer hand, while he poured into their ears his affectionate and eloquent remonstrance, “Let there be no strife between you, for ye are brethren ;” and that when his patriotic and beneficent career was terminated, men of all parties commingled their tears around his bier, and the entire nation mourned him as a public benefactor, the motto of whose life had

been that sublime sentiment, now doubly "dear to every true American heart—LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND FOR EVER, ONE AND INSEPARABLE!"

Before passing to the only remaining topic I propose to notice, a few words may be allowed respecting the private character of the deceased senator. It has been correctly observed, that "distinguished statesmen generally become what may be called technical characters: the whole human being becomes shaped into an official thing, and Nature's own man, with free faculties, and warm sentiments, and unconstrained manners, has disappeared." It was not so with Mr. Webster. Nature had entrenched herself too strongly in that colossal frame, to be driven out, and he remained "her own man" to the end. Persons who only saw him in a transient way might suppose he was simply a man of extraordinary intellect. Those who heard him, even in his more elaborate efforts, could not fail to see that he was also a man of generous sensibilities. But whoever was so fortunate as to meet him in social life, would learn that so far from being all *head*, he had a heart which was worthy to be the consort of that massive intellect. Nothing could obliterate—nothing even blunt his earnest sympathy with nature and with man. Neither his professional toils nor affairs of state, neither the applause nor the ingratitude of the public, could disturb the perennial freshness of his feelings. He loved the country. He delighted in the free intercourse of social life. His domestic affections were strong and

tender. He entered with a genial relish into the vivacity and humour of the passing hour. His generosity was proverbial. He was a steadfast friend—always frank, straight-forward, reliable—

— “A minister, but still a man.”*

It was a noble eulogium pronounced upon Mr. CLAY, the second of our great triumvirate who was gathered to his fathers, when a representative from his own State said, over his remains, “If I were to write his epitaph, I would inscribe, as the highest eulogy, on the stone which shall mark his resting-place, ‘Here lies a man who was in the public service for fifty years, and never attempted to deceive his countrymen!’” The inscription might with equal fidelity be inscribed upon the tombs of his great compeers. Of the third of this illustrious trio, Mr. Webster himself said, before the Senate, on the occasion of his funeral—

“He had the basis—the indispensable basis—of all high character, and that was unspotted integrity—unimpeached honour and character. If he had aspirations, they were high, and honourable, and noble. There was nothing grovelling, or low, or meanly selfish, that came near the head or the heart of Mr.

* Of his magnanimity we have this pleasing example. Mr. Everett relates, that in preparing the new edition of Mr. Webster’s works for the press, he was instructed by him to obliterate from his speeches, if practicable, “every trace of personality.”

CALHOUN. Firm in his purpose, perfectly patriotic and honest, as I am sure he was, in the principles he espoused, and in the measures he defended, aside from that large regard for that species of distinction that conducted him to eminent stations for the benefit of the Republic, I do not believe he had a selfish motive or a selfish feeling.

“We shall hereafter, I am sure, indulge in it as a grateful recollection that we have lived in his age, that we have been his cotemporaries, that we have seen him, and heard him, and known him. We shall delight to speak of him to those who are rising up to fill our places. And when the time shall come when we ourselves shall go, one after another, in succession to our graves, we shall carry with us a deep sense of his genius and character, his honour and integrity, his amiable deportment in private life, and the purity of his exalted patriotism.”

Mr. Webster himself might have sat for this fine portrait. It is his own character by a master-hand. If the fidelity of the sketch be doubted, there are competent witnesses to confirm it. “Mr. President,” said a leading member* of the New York Bar the other day, a gentleman and a Christian; “I have long been acquainted with Mr. Webster, and from all that I know, and from all that I have seen and heard, I bear testimony here to-day, that as a public man, he was a man of the highest integrity. It always seemed to me as if he acted under the immediate

* Hiram Ketchum, Esq.

conviction, that whatever he did was not only to be known to his own generation, but to posterity. He regarded political power in his own hands as a trust, and though always willing and desirous to gratify his friends, if he could, he never felt himself at liberty, for an instant, for any private means, to violate his great trust. I have known Mr. Webster in private circles, and in domestic life, and I bear testimony here to-day, that though I have received multitudes of letters from him which I now have, and many that have been destroyed by his orders, written in the most confidential and friendly manner—though I have had the pleasure of meeting him on many occasions, and at the festive board often where our sessions have been long—I bear testimony here to-day, that never in my life did I hear an improper thought or profane expression come from the lips of Daniel Webster; and I bear further testimony, that never, in writing or in my hearing, did he ever assail private character. No man was ever slandered—no man was ever spoken ill of by Daniel Webster. And I further bear testimony, that never in my life have I known a man whose conversation was uniformly so unexceptionable in its tone, and uniformly so edifying in its character. I may say further, that no man ever possessed greater tenderness of feeling. He never yet had an enemy—and we all can bear witness that he had enemies of the most malignant character—but he never yet had an enemy that if he came to him he would not have shared with him his last

dollar to relieve him, and mingle his sympathies with his. Mr. President, to say that these virtues were not marked with failings—to say that Daniel Webster was without them, would be to state that which was untrue; but they have been before the public again and again, and no friend of his could regret the fact, if they had not been exaggerated.”

Another distinguished lawyer* of that city said: “I knew Mr. Webster well. I had the honour of his acquaintance, and hope it is not too much to say, of his friendship, for more than a quarter of a century, and from his lips I never have heard an irreverent, a profane, or an unseemly expression, while his playful wit, his deep philosophy, his varied acquirements, and unrivalled powers of conversation, are among the richest treasures of my recollection.”

These testimonies, comprising, as they do, a minute scrutiny into the social habits of Mr. Webster for a long term of years, such as few men of any profession could bear, will do much to vindicate his reputation from the aspersions cast upon it by a malign party spirit. It is, however, the letters of great men which best reflect their personal traits; and we must wait for his private correspondence before we can properly appreciate those generous qualities which have been attributed to him. Judging from the specimens which have been published, his letters, when collected, will not only form one of the most attractive volumes in the language, but will amply authenticate the warm-

* J. Prescott Hall, Esq.

est encomiums his friends have pronounced upon his private virtues. Notice, for example, the strain of his reply to the letter he received two years ago from a large number of his old friends and neighbours in New Hampshire, in which he says, "I could pour out my heart in tenderness of feeling for the affectionate letter which comes from you. It is like the love of a family circle; its influences fall upon my heart as the dew of heaven." So, again, the letter on his early life, in which he describes the paternal farm, and narrates the circumstances which induced his father to send him to college, "in order," as one of his brothers used to say, "to make him equal to the rest of the children." In this letter he makes a touching allusion to the dead of the household.

"Looking out at the east windows, [the letter is dated at Franklin, May 3d, 1846,] at this moment (2 P. M.) with a beautiful sun just breaking out, my eye sweeps a rich and level field of one hundred acres. At the end of it, a third of a mile off, I see plain marble grave-stones, designating the places where repose my father, my mother, my brother Joseph, and my sisters, Mehitabel, Abigail, and Sarah, good Scripture names inherited from their Puritan ancestors.

"My father! Ebenezer Webster!—born at Kingston, in the lower part of the State, in 1739—the handsomest man I ever saw, except my brother Ezekiel, who appeared to me, and so does he now seem to me, the very finest human form that ever I laid eyes on. I saw him in his coffin—a white forehead—a tinged

cheek—a complexion as clear as heavenly light! But where am I straying? The grave has closed upon him, as it has on all my brothers and sisters. We shall soon be all together. But this is melancholy, and I leave it. *Dear—dear kindred blood, how I love you all!*”

There is another affecting allusion to these graves, in that inimitable letter written to his farmer at Franklin, from Washington, in March last, and beginning thus:—“JOHN TAYLOR—Go ahead. The heart of the winter is broken, and before the first day of April, all your land may be ploughed.” Then in the midst of minute agricultural directions, comes in this beautiful and characteristic sentence:—“Take care to keep *my mother's garden* in good order, even if it cost you the wages of a man to take care of it.” The letter closes thus:—“John Taylor, thank God, morning and evening, that you were born in such a country. John Taylor, never write me another word upon politics. Give my kindest remembrances to your wife and children; and when you look from your eastern windows upon the graves of my family, remember that he who is the author of this letter must soon follow them to another world.”

It is in familiar epistles like these we see the heart of the great statesman laid open: and the more fully it is unveiled, the more opulent will it be found in those affections and sympathies, which are rarely combined with the highest abilities, and as rarely outlast the cares and collisions of a long political career.

His devotion to agriculture has been hinted at : and rural occupations always have a tendency to keep up a healthful tone of feeling. But his communings were not all with nature. He was like Cowley :—

“ Ah, yet, ere I descend to the grave,
May I a small house and large garden have !
And a few friends and many books, both true,
Both wise, and both delightful too !”

The ‘large garden,’ the ‘friends,’ (though not a ‘few’) and the ‘many books,’ he had ; and well did he use them. The love of books was an early passion with him. He could recite the whole Essay on Man *verbatim* before he was fourteen years old. And while still a boy, he committed to memory, not as a task, but as a pleasure, Watts’s Psalms and Hymns. Nor was he less fond of the sublime poetry of the Bible. These habits continued with him through life. A very competent authority has remarked, that “the celebrity of Lord Mansfield and Lord Stowell, as judges, is in no small degree owing to their having continued to refresh and to embellish their professional labours by perusing the immortal productions of poets, historians, and moralists.” Mr. Webster pursued the same course and with the same results. The ancient and modern Classics were, with the Bible, his daily companions. His capacious mind was a store-house of useful and elegant learning, gathered from every source—from books, from careful observation of men and things; from a ripe experience and much reflec-

tion. This various and ample knowledge was so digested and arranged as to be always at his command. He could employ it with equal facility to instruct and amuse the social circle, to compose, if occasion required it, a Historical Discourse, which should astonish the country at the minuteness and accuracy of his classical lore, or to enrich his speeches with those graceful allusions and illustrations which are to an elaborate argument what the drapery is to the portrait, and the feather to the shaft. Let the young men of his profession profit by this example. No mind can be fed exclusively on law, without suffering. Nature will be certain to resent the huge indignity. He who would rise above the penury of the mere pleader, must have at least a sprinkling of books in his library, which are not bound in the canonical hue—*some* relief to the dismal monotony. Lord Eldon, it is true, might be cited, as an adverse precedent: for he once astonished the Bar, it is said, by telling them that, during the long vacation, he had read "*Paradise Lost*." But it should be added that nature took her revenge even upon a Lord Chancellor; since, according to Lord Campbell, towards the close of life, he could scarcely speak or write grammatically. Whatever a man's profession, the only way in which he can elude the tendency to become a narrow, technical, stereotype character, is to go forth occasionally into regions which lie beyond his daily walks; to talk with people of other creeds and other callings; to make excursions into the domain of science, and to appropriate some portion of his time, even if it be

but its brief remnants and parentheses, to literary pursuits. The error of those who neglect this, is only less pernicious than that which they fall into, who degrade their *profession* to a secondary place, and bestow their *chief* care upon other studies. We honour literature in a Lawyer, a Physician, or a Divine; but we cease to honour it when it becomes paramount. The noblest forensic arguments

“May flow from lips wet with Castalian dews:”

but Benches and Juries would be very impatient of an advocate whose speeches should sparkle with Castalian dews—and with nothing else. And, certainly, any congregation would be warranted in dismissing a pastor who should habitually substitute literary essays for the Gospel of Christ.—But it is time to return from this digression.

Undoubtedly Mr. Webster had his failings; and with some minds of a peculiar cast, these may even make it a matter of doubtful expediency to comment upon his character from the pulpit. It were certainly delightful could we dwell on his life and services without making any deduction for personal defects. Whatever those defects were, they will find no vindication here. But neither shall they be exaggerated here. Exaggerated they doubtless have been, for such is the evil custom of the country. We have got it by inheritance. In one of his shrewd and caustic letters from England, Voltaire observes, “So violent did I find par-

ties in London, that I was assured by several, that the Duke of Marlborough was a coward, and Mr. Pope a fool." If we may trust the partisan press of the Union, we seldom have a citizen nominated for any of the chief trusts of the government, who is not a fool, a coward, or a drunkard. An eminent civilian whose virtues adorn every domestic and social relation, remarked in his place in the Senate a few months since, that when his name was before the country as a candidate for the Presidency, he was charged with every crime except one mentioned in the decalogue. It is an indelible stigma upon the national character, that the freedom of the press should be permitted to degenerate into this intolerable licentiousness. How much of injustice the illustrious man whom Providence has taken from us, may have suffered in this way, I know not: that he encountered his full share of detraction, will be conceded by all who are willing to judge others as they would be judged themselves. For myself, I have no sympathy with those persons who when the sun is mentioned, can think only of his spots. I can take no pleasure in dwelling on the alleged frailties of a man like Daniel Webster. I choose rather to leave them where all *our* errors and delinquencies must be left, and to dwell on those aspects of his character and life which are stamped with true excellence and genuine sublimity, and which entitle him to the lasting gratitude of the American people.

It is a satisfaction to me to know that the convictions I entertain on this point, are shared by those gen-

tlemen whose official pastoral relations to him give a peculiar value to their opinions. And I feel with them that the friends of religion may cherish a just pride in appealing to the numerous testimonies he has left to the truth and efficacy of the Christian system.*

Any attempt, indeed, to estimate Mr. Webster's character and labours, which should omit or disparage this element, would be radically defective. He himself said with great truth and beauty, in announcing to the Supreme Court of Massachusetts the death of Jeremiah Mason†—"Religion is a necessary and indispensable element in any great human character. There is no living without it. Religion is the tie that connects man with his Creator, and holds him to his throne. If that tie be sundered, all broken, he floats

* I shall violate no confidence by publishing the following paragraph from a letter I have received from my old school-fellow and valued friend, the Rev. Dr. Butler, of Washington:—"I do believe that Mr. Webster was a truly converted and religious man. He was for more than five years a communicant in my Church, and always treated me, as his Pastor, with great affection, attention, and respect. His conduct in church was very reverent. His interest in solemn and direct preaching was very evident; his emotions often manifest; his dislike of flummery and pretension in the pulpit intense; his love of clear, strong, personal, affectionate presentation of the most distinguishing and important truths of the Gospel, proportionably warm. His conversation with me was more frequently than that of most religious men, on religious subjects. He never left the Church on Communion Sundays without coming to the communion; and his participation of that sacrament was marked with a peculiar concentration and solemnity of feeling."

† November 14, 1848.

away, a worthless atom in the universe ; its proper attractions all gone, its destiny thwarted, and its whole future nothing but darkness, desolation, and death. A man with no sense of religious duty is he whom the Scriptures describe in such terse but terrific language, as living 'without God in the world.' Such a man is out of his proper being, out of the circle of all his duties, out of the circle of all his happiness, and away, far, far away from the purposes of his creation."

These were no words of idle compliment. They were convictions inwrought in the very framework of his being. The BIBLE was one of the books on which his childhood had been nurtured. He continued a diligent student of it through life. He said to a friend a few years since, "I have read through the entire Bible many times. I now make a practice to go through it once a year. It is the book of all others for Lawyers as well as for Divines ; and I pity the man that cannot find in it a rich supply of thought and of rules for his conduct : it fits man for life—it prepares him for death." This reminds one of Fisher Ames, who once said, perhaps with too little qualification : "I will hazard the assertion that no man ever did, or ever will, become truly eloquent without being a constant reader of the Bible, and an admirer of the purity and sublimity of its language." It was not, however, with either of these eminent men a mere professional exercise. It was one of the most potent agencies in moulding them to that robust intellectual and moral structure by which they were distinguished.

A profound veneration for the Deity, blended with a cordial and generous recognition of Christianity, pervades Mr. Webster's writings beyond those of almost any contemporaneous statesman. It is not a meagre and reluctant acknowledgment of the scheme of natural religion. He well knew that this was no sufficient remedy for the evils of the fall. He regarded man as a lost sinner, in need of a SAVIOUR; and no system of faith could satisfy him, that did not provide a Saviour. It is the GOSPEL OF CHRIST which so often reveals itself in his speeches and correspondence, as the theme of emphatic allusion or of eloquent eulogy. It is evangelical Christianity, as supplying at once the only solid foundation for man to rest his immortal hopes upon, and the only sure guarantee of national freedom and happiness.

This point is of too much importance to be dismissed without exhibiting Mr. Webster's method of dealing with revealed religion. The following paragraphs are taken (with some abridgment) from one of his legal arguments; and the tone of them, as indeed the tone of the whole speech, is such as must carry conviction to the mind, that it is no less the man than the advocate who is speaking :

“The ground taken is, that religion is not necessary to morality; that benevolence may be insured by habit, and that all the virtues may flourish and be safely left to the chance of flourishing, without touching the waters of the living spring of religious responsibility. With him who thinks thus, what can be the value of

the Christian revelation? So the Christian world has not thought, for with that Christian world, throughout its broadest extent, it has been and is held as a fundamental truth, that religion is the only solid basis of morals, and that moral instruction, not resting on this basis, is only a building upon sand." "When little children were brought into the presence of the Son of God, his disciples proposed to send them away; but he said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me'—unto me; he did not send them first for lessons in morals to the schools of the Pharisees or to the unbelieving Sadducees, nor to read the precepts and lessons *phylacteried* on the garments of the Jewish priesthood; he said nothing of different creeds or clashing doctrines; but he opened at once to the youthful mind the everlasting fountain of living waters, the only source of immortal truths; 'Suffer little children to come unto me.' And that injunction is of perpetual obligation. It addresses itself to-day with the same earnestness and the same authority which attended its first utterance to the Christian world. It is of force everywhere and at all times. It extends to the ends of the earth, it will reach to the end of time, always and everywhere sounding in the ears of men with an emphasis which no repetition can weaken, and with an authority which nothing can supersede—'Suffer little children to come unto ME.'

"And not only my heart and my judgment, my belief and my conscience, instruct me that this great precept should be obeyed, but the idea is so sacred, the

solemn thoughts connected with it so crowd upon me, it is so utterly at variance with this system of philosophical *morality* which we have heard advocated, that I stand and speak here in fear of being influenced by my feelings to exceed the proper line of my professional duty.”*

In keeping with this fine passage, is that impressive announcement to the Court, of Mr. Mason’s death, already cited, in the course of which he quotes with approbation an account of the religious exercises of the deceased jurist, such as is rarely heard in our halls of Justice. “He was fully aware that his end was near; and in answer to the question, ‘Can you now rest with firm faith upon the merits of your Divine Redeemer?’ He said, ‘I trust I do: upon what else can I rest?’—At another time, in reply to a similar question, he said, ‘*Of course*, I have no other ground of hope.’” If I mistake not, there is something remarkable in this. It is not in the usual style of these announcements. There is no censoriousness in saying that very few of the men who stand in the front rank of the Profession, would have ventured upon it. But Mr. Webster could do it without scruple or embarrassment. It was as natural for him to do it, as it would have been for most of his associates to confine themselves to the more cautious formularies, which custom has prescribed as the official costume of Christianity, when she enters the Forum or the Senate. It was nothing for *him* to speak of a “Redeemer,” and of

* Argument in the Girard Will Case.

salvation through his blood. It was nothing for *him* to stand up in the presence of the Massachusetts Bar, and narrate to them how one, at whose feet they would, any of them, have been willing to sit, and at whose feet many of them had sat, as learners, utterly renounced, when he came to die, all dependence upon the virtues which adorned his character, and trusted for pardon only to the merits of Christ. The religion which centres in the Cross, had not only formed the groundwork of his Puritan training, but was, as his brethren well knew, one of his favourite and familiar studies through life. Its sublime doctrines opened to him a field in which his majestic powers loved to expatiate. Its consolations met the moral necessities of his nature. It was congenial to the grandeur of his imagination, which it nerved for its loftiest flights. It was in sympathy with the tenderness of his heart. A rigid, or even a tolerant, casuist might not find its foot-prints just where he required them. Some important indications of its presence, it must be conceded, were not there as they *ought* to have been. He had not escaped—what public man does escape?—the moth and the rust with which a political life eats in upon religious principle and religious habits.* But it does not admit of argument as to where his convictions

* There *are* exceptions. A very signal one in our own annals was once characterized by Mr. Webster himself, in terms so beautiful that I cannot forbear copying the sentence:—"When the spotless ermine of the judicial robe fell on JOHN JAY, it touched nothing not as spotless as itself."

were, where his desires were, where his endeavours were. Looking at him as a whole, it was apparent that he must have grown up in a healthful moral atmosphere—an atmosphere as fresh and bracing for his mental and moral nature, as the clear air and Alpine scenery of New Hampshire had been for his physical man. Daniel Webster never could have been what he was, nor anything approximating to what he was—still less could he have acquired his acknowledged ascendancy over the minds of his countrymen—had he been an infidel or even an indifferentist in religion. Those who would discover the secret of his strength—at least one secret of his strength—will find it in his systematic, thorough, and affectionate *study of the Scriptures*. How it produced its effects upon his intellectual powers, his temper and disposition, his jurisprudence, his statesmanship, and the whole tone and cast of his public labours, not to speak of his faultless style, it might not, perhaps, be difficult to show if the time would permit. But it must suffice to observe, on one single point, that there is an obvious logical connexion between that habit of mind which fitted him to grapple with the most complex questions, and to take the most comprehensive views of every subject, and those profound meditations on the moral government of Jehovah, and the relations and destiny of the soul, with which he was so often occupied. Those who value our Constitution and who desire the perpetuity of the Union, have great reason to bless God that Daniel Webster *loved and studied the Bible*. And it is not the least of the glories which cluster around

his character, that whether before the Bar of Massachusetts, or the Supreme Court of the United States, whether in the august presence of the Senate, or in the midst of an excited popular assemblage, he was never ashamed to avow his belief in the Gospel of Christ.

Here is one of the great lessons to be derived from his life—the greatest, indeed, of all. He is but a careless observer of society, who has not detected the encroachments of infidelity among the educated young men of the country within the last few years. It comes in a captivating form. The ribaldry of Paine and Voltaire would excite disgust. The metaphysical pyrrhonism of Hume would be too abstruse. Three other schemes are invented better adapted to the times. One is the theory of progressive development, which has been born and baptized within the Church. The second is a subtle and specious rationalism, which has been transplanted from Germany. And the third is a gorgeous Pantheism from the same hot-bed of error. These systems all breathe a complaisant language towards Christianity, while each is in its own way sapping its foundations. Without undertaking to appportion to each its specific agency in producing the result, the fact is indisputable, that many of the rising authors and professional men of the country are tinctured with a supercilious scepticism. Inflated by a spurious philosophy—"philosophy falsely so called"—they have come to regard Christianity as a sort of obsolete system, which has served its purpose, and must now be laid upon the shelf. It may still enlist the suffrages of the common people, but educated

men demand a system less humiliating in its personal requisitions, and more in keeping with the general progress of the world !

Now is it not a pleasant thing to be able to send these Solons to a man like DANIEL WEBSTER ? Scio-lists as they often are in literature, and always in sacred learning, let them sit down to the perusal of his works, and brand with puerility or fanaticism those noble passages scattered throughout every volume, in which *he* bows before the majesty of a personal and holy God, or extols the evangelical faith as the only hope of a lost world. They *dare* not do this, even though they refuse to follow in his steps. Pride or prejudice may impair the just influence of his example upon them, but it will not be lost upon others who have not yet plunged into the abyss of Atheism. Nor does Webster stand alone. It is auspicious for the country, and honourable to their memories, that our three leading statesmen who have lately gone down to the tomb, were all arrayed on the side of Christianity. A single testimony from one of them, whose oratory rang for forty years through the country like the notes of a silver trumpet, is all it may be requisite to cite. "Man's inability," said Mr. Clay,* shortly before his death, "to secure by his own merits the approbation of God, I feel to be true. I trust in the atonement of the Saviour of men, as the ground of my acceptance, and my hope of salvation. My faith is feeble, but I hope in his mercy and

* To Mr. Venable.

trust in his promises." There is a power in utterances like these which must be felt. Christianity, it is true, stands in no need of human props. Its buttresses are strong enough to defy—as for eighteen hundred years they have defied—the assaults of malice and envy, of unsanctified learning and audacious ignorance, of kingcraft and priestcraft, and whatever other weapons earth or hell may forge against her. But it may help to arm the ingenuous youth of our country against the seductions of unbelief, to remember that such men as HENRY CLAY and DANIEL WEBSTER—not to cite a cloud of other witnesses from the brightest pages in our national annals,—gave their deliberate testimony through life to the Divine authority of the Christian religion, and at death committed their souls to Jesus Christ as their Redeemer.

Various conflicting statements have been published respecting the closing scenes of Mr. Webster's life. From some of these it might be supposed that his mind was occupied with politics almost to the end. I am happy to have it in my power to correct these impressions. What I am about to state rests on the very best authority.

Mr. Webster, then, for at least two weeks before his death, might almost be said to have made no allusion to politics whatever. He neither conversed on the subject, nor gave the slightest indication that his thoughts were directed to it. On the contrary, his whole mind and his whole time were given "to his affections and his duties,"—to his domestic and social sympathies, and his preparation for death.

Beyond the circle of his family and friends, his thoughts were not of earth, but of heaven. Politics and every other temporal interest were banished, and his whole concern was with the things of eternity. During this period he referred to a purpose he had long entertained, of preparing a work on the Evidences of Christianity; and after expressing the conviction that he ought to leave behind him some testimony of this kind, he set about writing a statement of *his faith in the Christian religion, with the grounds and reasons of the same*. This paper, when finished, was read over with great care, and various alterations and interlineations made by him—a confidential friend acting as his amanuensis. He then placed it in the breast-pocket of his dressing-gown for convenient reference, and two or three days before his death, he drew it forth, and handed it to his friend, saying, “Here is this paper; I believe it is now as perfect as I can make it.” This interesting and important document, in which the argument for Christianity is said to be presented with singular force, will in due time be published. *Such* were the occupations which engrossed Mr. Webster’s mind in the prospect of death.

— “A setting sun
Should leave a track of glory in the skies.”

There *was* a bright and softened ray shooting upward from that shrouded chamber at Marshfield, where our great statesman lay expiring. It was his humble, steadfast confession of Jesus Christ.

The following particulars given by Dr. Jeffries, in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Butler, cannot fail to excite the deepest interest.

"On leaving Mr. Webster for the night, at 11½ o'clock, on Saturday, October 16th, 1852, I asked him if I should repeat to him a hymn at parting, to which he gave a ready assent, when I repeated the hymn which begins :

" 'There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.'

"He gave very serious attention to the recital, and at the close said, 'Amen, amen—even so come, Lord Jesus.' This was uttered with great solemnity. He afterwards asked me if I remembered the verse in one of Watts's hymns on the thought of dying at the foot of the Cross, and repeated these lines with remarkable energy and feeling :

" 'Should worlds conspire to drive me hence,
Moveless and firm this heart should lie,
Resolved (for that's my last defence),
If I must perish—*here* to die.'

"He repeated the text, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' and then what he had given to be inscribed upon his tombstone, which was as follows :

" 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.'

" 'Philosophical argument, especially that drawn from the vastness of the universe, in comparison with the apparent insignificance of this globe, has sometimes shaken my reason for the faith that is in me ; but my heart has always assured and reassured me, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be a divine reality.'

" 'The Sermon on the Mount cannot be a merely human production. This belief enters into the very depth of my conscience.

" 'The whole history of man proves it.'

" 'DANIEL WEBSTER.' "

On the evening before his death, he prayed in his usual voice, strong, full, and clear, and ended thus :

"Heavenly Father, forgive my sins, and receive me to thyself through Jesus Christ." He also exclaimed, "I shall be to-night in life, and joy, and blessedness." Later in the night a faintness occurred, which led him to think that death was at hand. While in this condition, some expressions fell from him, indicating the hope that his mind would remain to him completely to the last. He spoke of the difficulty of the process of dying, when Dr. Jeffries repeated the verse, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." He said immediately, "The fact—the fact. That is what I want. *Thy rod—thy rod: thy staff—thy staff.*" His last words were, "I STILL LIVE!"

These gleams of light which irradiated the chamber of death, now shed their lustre upon his secluded tomb. This tomb will have an interest for his countrymen and for intelligent strangers, inferior to that of no man of his generation.

"Such graves as his are pilgrim-shrines,
Shrines to no code or creed confined—
The Delphian vales, the Palestines,
The Meccas of the mind."

But pilgrims need not journey to Marshfield. His memorials are all over the land. Our farms and our factories—our ships and our railways—our school-houses and our churches—our courts and our legislatures—our domestic harmony and our honourable position among the nations—our matchless Constitu-

tion, stronger than ever against the paroxysms of misguided patriotism or malevolent faction, and our glorious UNION, firmer than ever in the affections of the people—*these* are his memorials. His character and achievements have become a part of our national renown. And until the country lacks a historian, DANIEL WEBSTER cannot want a biographer. To his country, indeed, (if we may embalm his name in one of his own beautiful tributes to departed greatness—the prophetic paraphrase of his dying words) “*he yet lives, and lives for ever*. He lives in all that perpetuates the remembrance of men on earth; in the recorded proofs of his own great actions, in the offspring of his intellect, in the deep-engraved lines of public gratitude, and in the respect and homage of mankind. He lives in his example; and he lives emphatically, and will live in the influence which his life and efforts, his principles and opinions, now exercise, and will continue to exercise, on the affairs of men, not only in their own country, but throughout the civilized world. A superior and commanding human intellect, a truly great man, when Heaven vouchsafes so rare a gift, is not a temporary flame, burning brightly for awhile, and then giving place to returning darkness. It is rather a spark of fervent heat, as well as radiant light, with power to enkindle the common mass of human mind; so that when it glimmers in its own decay, and finally goes out in death, no night follows, but it leaves the world all light, all on fire, from the potent contact of its own spirit.”

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